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ABSTRACT

Many factors make it difficult for establishment institutions to recruit adoptive minority families. Minority adoptive parent groups have begun to have an impact on removal of obstacles to recruitment of families and placement of minority children in permanent homes. Because parent groups have organized to educate both their communities and the agencies, substantial increases in placement have been noted in communities where minority adoptive parent groups are involved in the design and implementation of the program. Additionally, where these groups are actively monitoring the adoption process, there are significant increases in the number of families approved by the agencies. Minority adoptive parent groups can be formed by either agencies or communities. This publication provides guidelines for the formation of minority adoptive parent groups. Addressed are the steps for forming agency or community initiated groups, including their purposes, structure, officers, incorporation, tax exempt status, goals, and resources. Appended is a list of addresses for Region IX minority adoptive parent groups. (AH)

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INITIATING AND DEVELOPING

MINORITY ADOPTIVE PARENT GROUPS

BY

TEMPIE D. BEAMAN

August 1982

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BARRIERS TO THE ADOPTION OF MINORITY CHILDREN

There are large numbers of minority children in need of permanent homes throughout the nation. Statistics indicate that the outreach efforts of adoption agencies have been inadequate and inappropriate. There are many factors which make it difficult for establishment institutions to recruit minority familes to adopt. Five key factors are:

(1) lack of sensitivity to cultural differences in family life-style, value system and economic conditions on the part of agency staff

(2) lack of understanding of the adoption process and availability of adoption services by the community

(3) agency practices and procedures which discourage applicants from completing the process

(4) lack of minority staff

(5) poor reputation of agencies.

VALUE OF MINORITY PARENT GROUPS

Minority parent groups have begun to have an impact on the removal of obstacles to the recruitment of families and the placement of children in permanent homes. They have organized to educate both their communities and the agencies. There have been substantial increases in the number of applicants in communities where minority adoptive parent groups have been involved in the design and implementation of the recruitment program. Also, where these groups have actively monitored the adoption process on behalf of these applicants, there were significant increases in the number of approved families. Agencies which are seriously committed to finding permanent homes for minority children within their own ethnic communities, should initiate the development of minority parent groups.

INITIATING MINORITY ADOPTIVE PARENT GROUPS

There are two approaches to forming adoptive parent groups in minority communities. Agencies or community members (individuals or organizations) can initiate the process.

AGENCY INITIATED

There are four basic steps to forming a parent group.

(1) Identify Families

Minority adoptive families are a valuable resource to the community and the agency because of their unique experience in having completed the adoption process. Therefore, agencies should begin by contacting approved families (families with completed home studies). These families will be in various stages of the process--awaiting placement, awaiting finalization and finalized. Case workers are helpful in identifying families most likely to participate in a parent group.

(2) Set Meeting/Identify Purpose

Once the families have been identified, invite them to attend a meeting to discuss the idea of forming an adoptive parent group. Make sure the meeting is held in a convenient location and child care is provided. A church or school in the community are good locations. Businesses, banks or libraries which have community rooms are also good sites.

(3) Plan Agenda

Invite respected minority community leaders in fields related to adoption--child welfare, education, health--who can give insight into the problems of children without homes. It is also important to have someone discuss the current status of minority children in the Child Welfare System, nationally and locally, and give an

overview of adoption today.

A representative from an existing minority parent group or someone knowledgeable about these groups should be present to discuss group formation, goals and accomplishments.

Specific needs of the agency and those of the waiting children can be addressed by an agency representative, preferably a minority, who has demonstrated sensitivity to minority applicants.

(4) Identify Committee

After the discussion, one can determine the level of interest of the families in attendance in forming a group. Families willing to form a committee to begin establishing the group should be identified and an initial meeting set.

COMMUNITY INITIATED

If you are an adoptive parent or other person interested in forming a parent group, two approaches are:

(1) Take your idea and concerns to an already organized body, such as your church group, sorority, civic or social organization. Discuss with them the feasibility of addressing adoption issues as a project of the organization or forming a committee to address specific adoption issues. Find out if there are parent support groups in your area from your local adoption agencies.

(2) Invite friends and neighbors to your home to explore the possibility of forming an adoptive parent group.

With either approach, the following steps are effective in getting established and learning more about adoption and adoption issues.

(1) Contact your local agencies, chapter of National Association of Social Workers, or National Association of Black Social Workers to request a minority representative to give an overiew of adoption

today and the status of minority children from a local and national perspective. An agency representative can address the specific needs of the waiting children and the agency. Established adoptive parent groups can usually offer technical assistnace in the form of speakers and written resource material on adoption and related issues. They can also assist in giving some direction to your group.

(2) Once it has been determined that forming a parent group is feasible and desired, select a committee to begin the planning and organizing.

DEVELOPING MINORITY ADOPTIVE PARENT GROUPS

Now that a group of individuals has been selected to put the organization together, there are several major decisions to be made.

PURPOSE

The purpose is the backbone of any organization. Parent groups have served many purposes. As support groups, they provide assistance with the adoption process, moral support during the waiting period, respite care and help in coping with adjustment difficulties. As adoption agency auxillaries (service organizations), their members perform any number of tasks to assist the agency in carrying out its programs. These tasks include fund-raising, clerical duties, transporting children to medical facilities and hosting holiday parties for the children. Advocacy and support have become the main purpose of the more recently organized minority parent groups. They have been formed with the objective of removing barriers to the adoption of minority children. Their activities include monitoring the adoption process and working with agencies to sensitize their staff to the cultural differences of minority applicants.

These examples will give some idea as to the purpose behind many parent groups. The purpose of your organization will depend upon the needs and concerns of the individuals involved.

STRUCTURE

For a group to function effectively, it must have a structure that allows for interchange among members and a decision making process. There are three structures commonly used--steering committees, executive committees and board of directors.

Steering committees consist of members of the group with equal voting privileges who make decisions jointly.

Executive committees consist of the elected officers who may be given the authority to make decisions for the entire organization. They may also discuss issues and make recommendations to the entire body who then vote on the recommendations.

Boards of directors are similar to executive committees in that they consist of the elected officers. They, also, include other elected members. Boards may also be composed of individuals who are not members of the organization, but have been given the authority to act for the organization.

OFFICERS

No matter what organizational structure is utilized, the group will need to elect officers. Typically, these should be president or chairperson, vice-president or vice-chairperson, secretary and treasurer.

Additional information on organizational structure and officers can be found in Roberts Rules of Order.

INCORPORATION

A group that incorporates, plans to be in business for awhile and has taken the time to thoroughly think through their purpose and goals. Businesses, corporations and individuals tend to take more seriously those groups which have formalized their organization by incorporating.

Contact your local Secretary of State's office for application, filing procedures and fees. Be prepared to submit proposed articles of incorporation and by-laws. Most public libraries have manuals on forming non-profit corporations. These books have examples of articles of incorporation and by-laws.

Basically, the articles contain

- *-the name of the organization*
- *-purpose of the organization*
- *-name and address of the organization's representative.*

By-laws are the rules and regulations of the organization. Include in the by-laws

- *-the name of the organization*
- *-objectives of the organization*
- *-description of officers and their duties*
- *-meetings*
- *-description of decision-making body and its powers*
- *-committees*
- *-membership*
- *-dues and fees*
- *-and any other rules deemed of such importance as to be included.*

The majority of adoptive parent groups are formed as non-profit public benefit corporations for charitable purposes.

TAX EXEMPTION

Under certain circumstances, non-profit organizations are eligible for exemption from state and federal taxes. This means the organization will not have to pay taxes on any funds. It also means the group can receive donations from businesses and individuals which are tax deductions for the donors.

Information on tax exemption status can be obtained from the local Internal Revenue Service office and the state tax office. To complete the application you will need conformed copies of your articles of incorporation and by-laws. (Conformed means approved by the Secretary of State and containing the State stamp and seal). Be prepared to give a narrative description of the activities of the group.

GOALS

It is to the advantage of the organization to meet with the administrators of the local adoption agencies to discuss your concerns and ways in which you can work together. This discussion will assist you in determining your goals. Some major objectives of minority adoptive parent groups have been--

Recruitment--minority families are needed to adopt waiting children. Activities which involve the children and provide an opportunity for the community to view them as real people rather than just statistics, are most effective.

Community education--misconceptions about adoption and the adoption process are prevalent in minority communities. Activities which help to dispel the myths and misconceptions increase the number of potential applicants.

Monitoring the adoption process--by observing what happens to minority applicants as they proceed with the adoption process, adoptive parent groups have the opportunity to advocate for change in policies and practices which are obstacles to the adoption of children.

These objectives are only examples of ways minority parent groups are impacting the system and affecting change for the benefit of the children.

RESOURCES

The resources of an organization are the people in the group, the skills of the members and their contacts in the community. These resources are vitally important to the success of the group. Analyze your resources carefully before deciding the projects you want to undertake. Be sure your resources are adequate so as not to "burn out" enthusiastic members.

CONCLUSION

Now that you have decided to initiate a parent group, remember. You are not alone! Currently there are over 60 minority parent groups throughout the nation and the number continues to grow. These groups have begun to have an impact on the system and will continue to advocate for change to benefit minority children.

REGION IX MINORITY ADOPTIVE PARENT GROUPS

Association for the Adoption of Black Children (AABC)
P.O.Box 6643
San Bernardino, Ca. 92412

Bay Area Black Adoptive Parent Council (BABAPC)
P.O.Box 10495
Oakland, Ca 94610

Black Linkage for Adoptive Children (BLAC)
P.O.Box 8414
Los Angeles, Ca. 90008

Concilio Hispanic Parents Support Group (CHPSG)
P.O.Box 1503
Riverside, Ca. 92501

Families Created by Adoption
1071 S. Minaret
Turlock, Ca. 95380

JAMAA
P.O.Box 552
Seaside, Ca. 93955

League of Mexican American Women
P.O.Box 686
Fresno, Ca. 93712

Padres Por Los Ninos
3832 Feemster
Visalia, Ca. 93277

Tayari Adoptive Parents
P.O. Box 14554
San Diego , Ca. 92114

United Native Indian Tribe
P.O.Box 806
Project City, Ca. 96079

Ward Parent Adoption Group
1177 West 25 Street
Los Angeles, Ca. 90007

Black Child Advocates
P.O.Box 39615
Phoenix, Az. 85069

Black Adoptive Parents and Advocates
1131 S. Cadiz
Oxnard, Ca. 93033

Hispanic Childrenis Family Support Group
1819 W. Elm Street
Phoenix, Az. 85015

Members and Advocates for Minority Adoptions (MAMA)
6245 W. Elmira Drive
Las Vegas, Nv. 89118

*Black Adoption Council of United Parents (BAC-UP)**
P.O.Box 56278
Los Angeles, Ca. 90008

**A coalition of Black adoptive parent groups.*